

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, July 17, 1881, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Georgetown, D. C. Sunday, July 17th, 1881. My dear little May:

How are you getting on? And what have you done about nurses? I did not think of Maria as a temporary nurse. I would certainly take her rather than the young girl. My only objection to Maria was as a permanency on account of her having children of her own to take care of. I think however you could not do better than take her until you get another nurse in place of Elise. If you have already engaged the other — take her only for one week on trial.

You poor little wifie, I feel so anxious about you. How do you manage about going up and down stairs? Lina should be very careful about riding Dandy as he is or rather was quite lame. How is she getting on with her painting in the Art Museum? Is the Doctor still with you or is he now in Canada? I hope he or Johnson will remain in the house till I return. Now about self.

On reaching Washington Prof. Newcomb and Priv. Sec. Brown were at depot with President's carriage and drove us at once to White House where we saw Dr. Woodward and Dr. Bliss. I gave the basket of grapes to Priv. Sec. Brown for Mrs. Garfield with our card which read. "To Mrs. Garfield, a slight token of sympathy from Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell." Next day Mr. Brown expressed for Mrs. Garfield her thanks. I have received a card admitting me to White House at any time. I found at the White House a Hughes Induction Balance forwarded by Mr. George Hopkins of New York with letters from him and others relative to it. I telegraphed him that Induction Balance looked promising and stated

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I should be glad of suggestions. Result he is constructing apparatus in New York and will communicate with me. One or two telegrams received already.

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Suggestions have been telegraphed to me also from Prof. Trowbridge and from Prof. Rowland of John Hopkins University. I sent a cablegram to Mr. Preece as follows: "Can Hughes suggest form of Induction Balance to locate leaden bullet in President. If so cable at my expense." No answer received as yet. I telegraphed to Davis and Watts for a workman. Mr. Watts replied that he was short of hands but would come on himself. He arrived Friday evening — At once stripped off coat and waistcoat and went to work upon construction of apparatus. We have constructed Balances of different sizes and get better and better results as we reduce the size of the apparatus. We are now constructing coils just the size of the leaden bullet itself and hope for still better effects.

Yesterday we were able to locate a bullet held in the clenched hand — and last night I located successfully a bullet hidden in a bag filled with cotton-waste. This looks promising. Maximum hearing distance yet obtained — two inches.

Shall see Dr. Woodward and make appointment with him to witness experiment.

Nothing further to add save that I am suffering less from heat than usual. Have filled out your cheque for fifty dollars — Please see that Johnson notes the amount drawn in the Charles Ruin hat. Bank cheque book so that our balance may be kept straight.

Have been staying in Washington — but came out here last night. I think of buying a study sofa for Papa for his wedding day (Tuesday) but don't know what to get for Mamma. Telegraph suggestion. Kiss for Elsie (x) Kiss for you (X) Kiss for Daisy (x)

Your loving husband, Alec.